

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION
SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOC
901 COMMERCE ST STE 401
NASHVILLE
NOV 19 2008
37203-3620

CE 1877

6, 2008

OL. 132

No. 42

44



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Messengers united on record budget

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Messengers from the Mississippi Baptist Convention's 2,134 churches met in annual session for the 173rd time on October 28-29 at First Church, Jackson, approving a record Mississippi Cooperative Program budget for 2009 and electing Columbus pastor Mickey Dalrymple to a second term as president.

The theme of the 2008 annual meeting was "Ye shall be witnesses in Samaria..." based on Acts 1:8. A total of 1,039 messengers were officially registered during the meeting, up from 979 messengers at the 2007 annual meeting.

The 2009 Cooperative Program budget of \$34,940,629, represents an overall increase of just under two percent, or \$676,866, in comparison to the 2008 budget. The 2009 budget was presented by Weldon Aultman, budget committee chairman and member of First Church, Indianola, and approved without opposition.

The Southern Baptist Convention portion of the 2009 Mississippi Cooperative Program remains steady, with 35% (\$12,229,220) going to Southern Baptist Convention causes. A total of 24.8% (\$8,658,013) will go to Mississippi Baptist institutions and agencies; 37.4% (\$13,069,396) will go to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board programs; and 2.8% (\$984,000) will go to church retirement and protection.

In total dollars, the Southern Baptist Convention portion of the budget reflects an increase of \$236,903 (two percent). The Mississippi Institutions and Agencies section increases \$178,711 (2.1%), and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board section increases \$261,252 (two percent).

If Mississippi Cooperative Program giving exceeds the budget in 2009, the challenge portion will be divided 50% to Christian education, 25% to coastal evangelism in the state, and 25% to Southern Baptist mission causes.

Dalrymple, long-time pastor of Fairview Church, Columbus, was reelected by acclamation to his second one-year term as president. He was nominated by Kermit McGregor, transitional pastor at Hillcrest Church, New Albany. The nomination was seconded by Tommy Mitchell, pastor of Agricola Church, Lucedale.

David Hamilton, pastor of West Heights Church, Pontotoc, was reelected by acclamation to his second one-year term as first vice-president. He was nominated by Lloyd Sweatt, pastor of Meadowood Church, Amory. The nomination was seconded by Randy Von Kanel, pastor of First Church, Tupelo.

Rickey Blythe, pastor of First Church, New Albany, was elected to his first one-year term as second vice-president. He defeated Edd Lawrence, pastor of Clarksdale Church, Clarksdale, and Joe Pate, pastor of First Church, Greenwood.

Blythe was nominated by Chris Aldridge, pastor of Freedom Church, New Albany. The nomination was seconded by Rex Yancey, pastor of First Church, Ripley. Blythe replaces Steve Mooneyham, missions director for Gulf Coast Association in Gulfport, who declined to be nominated for a second one-year term.

Hugh Plunkett, minister of music at First Church, Magee, nominated Lawrence. The nomination was seconded by Dan Sandlin, member of Clarksdale Church, Clarksdale.

Tommy Williamson, pastor of Immanuel Church, Greenwood, nominated Pate. The nomination was seconded from the convention floor.

Michael Weeks, pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Olive Branch, was elected by acclamation to his first one-year term as convention recording secretary. He served for several years as associate recording secretary and replaces longtime recording secretary Gus Merritt of Newton, retired pastor of Clarke Venable Church, Decatur, who declined to be nominated.

Merritt nominated Weeks. The nomination was seconded from the convention floor. Weeks in turn nominated L. Daniel Watts, pastor of Sharon First Church, Laurel, to serve as associate recording secretary. The nomination was seconded from the convention floor. Watts was elected by acclamation.

A pair of resolutions was submitted by messengers, and both were approved without opposition. The first resolution expressed appreciation to the staff of First Church, Jackson, for hosting the annual meeting; the speakers, singers, and instrumentalists; convention president Mickey Dalrymple; and those "who have served this convention as a labor of love."

The second resolution thanked the Mississippi Baptist Convention family for their support of the Cooperative Program and implored Mississippi Baptists to "continue reaching Mississippi and the world for Jesus."

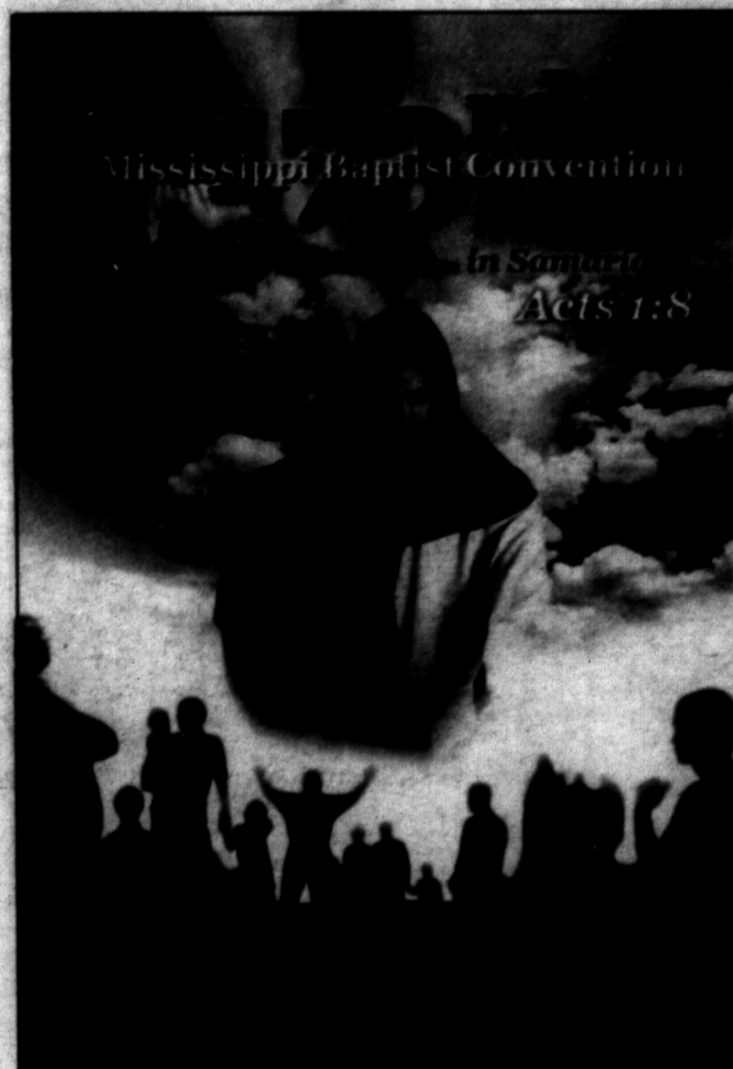
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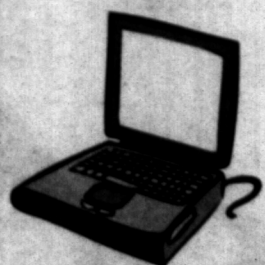
- Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra of Fairview Church, Columbus.
- Mississippi Singing Churchmen.
- Sanctuary Choir of First Church, Kosciusko.

Please turn to MBC, Page 2

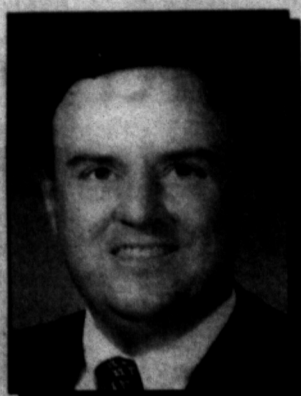


NEW OFFICERS — Mississippi Baptist Convention officers elected during the 173rd annual meeting of the convention October 28-29 at First Church, Jackson, include (from left) Michael Weeks, pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Olive Branch, recording secretary; David Hamilton, pastor of West Heights Church, Pontotoc, first vice-president; Mickey Dalrymple, pastor of Fairview Church, Columbus, president; Rickey Blythe, pastor of First Church, New Albany, second vice-president; and Dan Watts, pastor of Sharon First Church, Laurel, associate recording secretary. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)





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Send changes of address to: The
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and
address changes to: The Editor,
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
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VOLUME 132 • NUMBER 42
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$9.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items—one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising—two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

No bleeding leads here

News reporting today is based on a simple premise — “If it bleeds, it leads.” That means the lead story in newspapers and on television often has to do with the goriest, most graphic events of the relentless 24/7 news cycle. That in turn explains why so many murders, automobile accidents, airplane crashes, and similar stories are pushed to the front of the line ahead of less sensational fare.

The technique must work, because we buy a lot of newspapers and watch a lot of television news. To be fair, news media outlets in Mississippi for the most part are quite circumspect when it comes to reporting calamities. We don't often see mangled bodies or gaping wounds, thank goodness. When the story contains particularly disturbing elements, we are usually warned ahead of time. That's not the case in many news media markets around the country.

If reporters can't find the bleeding lead, their second choice is usually a controversial or ill-advised statement made by someone who may or may not be

in the know on the subject at hand. Especially in this just-ended political season, we have witnessed plenty of reporters scurrying around and sticking note pads and microphones in the faces of people who really don't know what they're talking about. Reporters seem to think those kinds of story lines can be a good substitute for a bleeding lead.

Thankfully, there was no blood spilled at the 2008 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) on October 28-29 at First Church, Jackson, so there were no bleeding leads. Likewise, there wasn't even a single controversial or ill-advised statement to report here or in the secular news media.

There is plenty of news to be reported,

however. Messengers from the 2,134 churches in friendly cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention voted to adopt a Cooperative Program budget of \$34,940,629 — a record amount. In the face of the ongoing financial crisis in the world, the U.S., and many households as recession sets in, it took a lot of faith to set such a lofty goal with every intention of meeting the challenge.

Incumbent MBC President Mickey Dalrymple, longtime pastor of Fairview Church, Columbus, was reelected by acclamation to a second term. First Vice-President David Hamilton, pastor of West Heights Church, Pontotoc, was likewise reelected by acclamation to a second term.

In the only contested race, Rickey Blythe, pastor of First Church, New Albany was elected over two other fine Mississippi Baptist pastors to serve as second vice-president. There were no rancor and hard feelings even in that lone contested race, which can all too often become the case in other state conventions and at the Southern Baptist Convention level as well.

There were also moving sermons, lofty music, and inspirational testimonies — but no bleeding leads. There were reports from MBC agencies and institutions highlighting how Mississippi Baptists continue to move forward in the campaign to help bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus — but no bleeding leads. There were the palpable presence of God at every session and the leading of the Holy Spirit — but no bleeding leads.

We Mississippi Baptists are most fortunate, not to mention blessed, to have a sense of unity and purpose that many far-flung organizations like ours would love to experience even for a little while. To God be the glory for that.

No bleeding leads here. To God be the glory for that, too.



JOE THE PLUMBER — Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), portrays Joe the Plumber during the MBCB emphasis at the October 29 evening session of the 2008 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at First Church, Jackson. Futral's message about Joe the Plumber, who recently made national news when he confronted Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama at a public event, tied in with the meeting's Acts 1:8 theme of taking the Gospel to Samaria. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

MBC (continued from page one)

- Metro Jackson combined choirs.
- Mississippi College Singers.

Worship leaders included Slater Murphy, minister of music at Fairview Church, Columbus; David Blackwell, minister of music at First Church, Kosciusko; Graham Smith, church music director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; and Randy Wood, minister of music at First Church, Tupelo.

Testimonies were given by Sammy Gilbreath, director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist Convention; Jerrod McCabe, interim pastor of Thompson Hill Church, Beaumont; Iris Blue of Duane and Iris Blue Ministries of Lucas, Texas; and Janet Thomas, executive director of Choose Life Mississippi.

David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, delivered the Bible Treasure series of devotions.

The 2009 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention will be held October 27-28 at First Church, Jackson. Randy Bostick, pastor of Oakland Church, Corinth, will preach the convention sermon.



PRAISE TO THE MAKER — The Mississippi College Singers perform October 29 during the final session of 2008 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at First Church, Jackson. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Author encourages mom/daughter ties

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP) — Author Vicki Courtney gets an intended laugh when she calls raunchy fashions peddled to preschoolers the "Prosti-Tot line," but from Hollywood to Madison Avenue, the unrelenting pressure on girls to dress sexy is serious business, she said.

Nearly 1,000 mothers and their daughters gathered at First Church in Spartanburg, S.C., for a You and Your Girl conference to hear Courtney's biblically-based advice on confronting and counteracting the culture that seeks to rob girls of childhood.

You and Your Girl conferences are sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The intense and entertaining mother-daughter conference, with age-appropriate breakout sessions for girls, attracted participants from as far away as Idaho, Florida, and New York.

Founder of Virtuous Reality Ministries, Courtney is author of numerous books including *Your Girl: Raising a Godly Daughter in an Ungodly World*. Her newest book, *5 Conversations You Must Have With Your Daughter*, is scheduled for release by LifeWay's B&H Publishing Group in November.

Courtney makes it her mission to expose how the culture zeroes in on kids, and she works to demystify how parents can stay tuned in. She shares the latest alarming statistics, including that one million teens will become pregnant in the United States in the next 12 months and that eating disorders are the third most common chronic illness among adolescent girls.

"I'm not trying to scare you so you run out of the room scream-

ing; I just want you to know," Courtney said conference.

It's important to tell girls that 40% of sexually active teen girls have a sexually transmitted disease, Courtney said.

"Some of these STDs will go undetected for many, many years," causing serious health risks and fertility problems, she said. "Even for your rebellious teen, none of them want to envision a time when they cannot have children."

A professed agnostic and vocal Christian critic before becoming a Christian at age 21, Courtney said, "I especially would have given anything to have heard something like this a little bit sooner."

With an abortion in her past, Courtney voiced her passion about teaching kids to avoid risky behavior that results in lifelong regrets that hold young lives back from the "marathon" they should be running alongside Christ — and she affirmed that moms are justified in taking away cell phone and Facebook privileges, and even limiting peer groups.

One of the hardest lessons her daughter had to learn was watching previously "good Christian girls go berserk in high school," Courtney said.

"We put her in the big old public school — that I call the modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah. She watched some of her friends go through things, and she had to make a decision to cut away from the pack," Courtney said.

"I want you to get your bravery back," she told moms, encouraging them to "go for it."

"When we go for it, I want to make sure we know what the



TOUTING VIRTUE — Vicki Courtney, a Broadman & Holman author and frequent LifeWay Christian Resources conference speaker, reaches girls through her Virtuous Reality Ministries message that "virtue is vogue." (BP photo)

goal is. This is your gift. You are really good at that, and you are to share and bless others with that," Courtney said.

That's what mom Susan Clause had in mind when she trekked with her 16-year-old daughter Sharon all the way from Stony Point, N.Y., to South Carolina for the conference.

"I try to find a way to build up each of my daughters with their gifting," Clause said. "I try to reach out and find out what their giftings are" and how to use them for spiritual purposes.

Also the mother of a "tween" girl who is 10, Clause said facing a series of family challenges, including her husband's disfiguring battle with mouth cancer and her mother's failing health,

makes it even more important to spend time with her girls.

"I want her to feel that I celebrate her and she is God's treasure. I want to celebrate her teenage years, and move from being overwhelmed by circumstances of our current challenges in her young life to knowing that every challenge is an opportunity," Clause said.

P.J. Friedel drove from Atlanta to bring her third-grade daughter Taylor.

"I want to teach my daughter about God. There are so many ungodly influences trying to get at her. I want her to be able to stand up to the culture that is so focused on making them something they are not meant to be," Friedel said.

Looking back

10 years ago

Barry Ward is called as pastor to First Church, Magnolia. He previously pastored Puckett Church, Puckett.

20 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Convention meeting at First Church, Jackson, approves a motion to amend the budget, giving \$200,000 to Baptist-affiliated Clarke College in Newton. The motion, which passes 871-413, is presented at the request of Mississippi College trustees who are managing Clarke.

50 years ago

Mississippi Baptists go over the top for the 1957-58 Convention year by giving \$2,025,381.84 to world missions through the Cooperative Program, according to Chester Quarles, executive secretary-treasurer.

MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

NOVEMBER 6, 2008

VOL. 132

No. 42



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

New Guidestone program

DALLAS (BP) — This fall, many Southern Baptist churches and ministries will have access to property and casualty insurance and risk management services from GuideStone Agency Services. The GuideStone Property & Casualty (P&C) Program will gradually roll out regionally over the next year. The program offers churches property, general liability, workers compensation and auto insurance. Specialty coverages such as abuse and molestation, directors and officers liability, and pastoral counseling also are available. Insured churches have access to risk management services which include educational seminars and programs on risk evaluation, tools to help reduce risk, and preferred pricing from a vendor that provides volunteer background checks. "This is a highly customized insurance program," said Douglas D. Day, GuideStone executive officer who is giving leadership to GuideStone Agency Services. "This program is designed specifically to meet the needs of Southern Baptist churches and ministries, and we're proud that we can bring them not only affordable insurance coverage but comprehensive educational materials and risk management tools. We want our churches to be able to protect everything from their people and their physical property to their intangible assets." As church and ministry staffs stay busier than ever serving their growing, diverse communities, GuideStone continues to support them, GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins noted. "We trust this new service will be another opportunity for GuideStone, through its insurance agency affiliate, to partner with our Southern Baptist churches and ministries," Hawkins said. "Our goal is to help churches be the best stewards of their resources so they can focus on their calling and mission." For specific information, call (888) 984-8433.

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YSLUKH QOKIK, FSA FENP
TAH EWHOL HSO
WNOKS, ZIH EWHOL HSO
KMULUH.

LARETK OUVSH: ATO

Clue: F=W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Proverbs Three Five

INAPPROPRIATE PRIORITIES

In September 2008, the nation was shocked as it watched the unfolding story of the Los Angeles train crash. The last count I heard, 27 died from the crash and scores of people were severely injured and facing long-term rehabilitation. What happened was that two trains, one a freight train and the other one a passenger train, collided head-on. The first responders were there for several days looking for bodies and making sure that everyone had been taken out of the mangled metal that was left behind. Of course, the investigation began immediately to try to discover what had gone wrong. How could such a thing happen with all of the warnings and backup systems to make sure that the trains would not be on the same track headed toward each other? Almost immediately, they began to say that the crash was due to human error. At first, we did not know what that meant apart from the fact that someone had not paid any attention to the signals, and the signal to stop and get on a sidetrack had been totally ignored by the engineer. Then after a few days of investigation, we began to hear that a couple of young men had received text messages on their phones. The assumption clearly was that the engineer had been typing out text messages and failed to see the stop signal.

At the present time, text messaging is one of the hottest things going. Young people love it and will type out a message and send it to a friend who may be sitting right beside them. Occasionally, I have texted someone but my one-finger-hunt-and-peck method of typing out what I want to say is just too time-consuming and painstakingly worrisome. I often tell people who text me, "Be sure you text a yes or no question." In the terms of text message shortcuts, you can answer either Y or N and that does not take very long. Keep in mind that there is nothing immoral or illegal about the act of text messaging somebody but it can be very dangerous, even

deadly to try to do while you are driving a car or a huge locomotive engine.

The problem is that the engineer at that moment could have been acting on an inappropriate priority. While there is nothing particular sinister or evil about texting, it should not be the priority for someone who should be paying attention to traffic signals. Everyday our lives are filled with decisions. Every day, knowingly or by design, we shape our lives based on the fact that some decisions are just inappropriate.

Most of our days are made up of Y's in the road. When you choose to go to the right, you are automatically rejecting going to the left and vice versa. If you choose to text someone a message, it could well mean that at the moment you choose not to be fully engaged and understanding of what is taking place right around you. Very clearly, what that means is that there are some things that are more important than others. Since you and I are the decision makers, it is so easy for us to make a subtle and sudden choice that may be an inappropriate priority.

Parents can do it and frequently do. They want to make sure that their child has all of the advantages of school, that they are socially adjusted, academically challenged, and possibly athletically fulfilled. On the other hand, they may find it virtually impossible to squeeze in time with the Lord, involvement in church, or the Lord having any kind of on-going significant place in the child's life.

It is not unusual to see the same problem in a different venue with parents. Sometimes a dad may have time to golf, fish, or hunt, but not provide quality time and connection



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

with the child to help them grow in the Lord. While there is nothing wrong with some of the things that they may personally want to do, it may be that they become guilty of inappropriate priorities.

Another issue that is so sadly true and often revealing is the fact that you may not know that you were setting the wrong priority until it is, in fact, too late to do anything about it. It is impossible to unring a bell, to unsay a word, or to unraise a child. Inappropriate prioritizing always leads a person to grief and sorrow knowing that it need not be. Deaths, injuries, suffering, and

human sadness are all a part of an experience that did not need to take place. What need not have been can be very dramatic.

On the other hand, inappropriate priorities can look perfectly normal because they are presented in such microscopic experiences. The man who refuses to exercise or to eat right may not tell any significant change in his life, but once a doctor begins to examine the years of lack of activity he may begin to point out the results of inappropriate options. Frankly though, at times it is hard to know what you should do and where you should be that will be both appropriate and beneficial. Remember this — that while you may just press along in life making inappropriate priority decisions, our Lord does not work that way. He is going to do the right thing at the right time for His people's good and that includes this day in your life.

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Wasting and Wanting

By Rob Chambers

Miss. Baptist Christian Action Comm.

My father reminded me of a valuable principle a couple of weeks ago when I went to help clean up around his store. One of the things I threw away was an old, plastic garbage can. It had to have been at least 15 years old. My dad had patched it with duct tape, but some of the tape covering a big split had come off. I thought, "Why not just throw it away and buy another one if need be." So, I tossed it in the trash.

Later, I learned that daddy had pulled the old trashcan out of the trash! When he did so, he said, "willful waste brings woeful want" — quoting 17th century British clergyman, Thomas Fuller.

I realized that recovering the can and "fixing" it was consistent with the stewardship philosophy he's lived by most of his life. He was born in 1924 and grew up through The Great Depression. He learned the valuable lesson that a time is coming when one will be in woeful want for what they willfully waste.

People waste money on all types of things. We buy all sorts of gadgets and gizmos we don't need. They'll likely end up in a drawer or closet and eventually thrown away or sold at a garage sale for pennies on the dollar. We buy things we

don't really need, and when the time comes to buy what we really do need — well, Americans are oftentimes short on cash. The solution — charge it! But the problem for many is that they've maxed out their cards on buying frivolous, needless things.

The point my dad was making was about being wasteful with money and goods, but God has entrusted us to be stewards of much more!

If we are not good stewards of what God has given us, then there will be a time when we will be begging for that which we squandered. God has called us, for example, to be stewards of our relationships and time.

I learned at almost 6 years old that mid-life was not 40 years old. For my oldest sister, Carol, her mid-life was around 8 years old, as she tragically died her junior year in high school. The time and opportunity to know her was very brief, and I, like you, cannot turn back time.

God has created us to be relational — to Him first and foremost, but don't neglect investing quality time with your spouse and children, and family and friends. Whenever you're with them, be all there. Don't pretend you're listening to them. Be an active listener and pay attention to what they say. Take the time

to love them as Christ does. Minister to their needs. Know their desires and dreams. Love them while they're here so you won't regret it when they're gone.

What can happen when Christians don't invest quality time with their spouse and children? They can feel emotionally abandoned. If time is not set aside to develop and deepen these relationships, the temptation will be for a spouse to turn elsewhere to be heard, comforted and consoled. Children may turn to someone else for help with their struggles and answers to life's questions. If time spent with family is wasted, then it's really difficult to make up for lost time.

We wonder why the family is in a state of crisis today. So many families are broken as the result of divorce. Children of divorced parents are often left choosing which parent to turn too — feeling like they have to choose one over the other. If spouses and parents would strive to be good stewards of their relationships, then the condition of marriages in America would most likely improve.

Also, God calls us not to waste time being ineffective witnesses to the lost. The Bible tells us in Col. 4:5,6 "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be seasoned with salt, so

that you may know how you ought to answer each person." The Bible also says in Eph. 5:15, 16, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Don't put off befriending and ministering to those who don't know Christ in your community, but when doing so, be careful what you say and how and when you say it.

Christians often ask, "How is it that our nation has reached the point of moral decay it has?" It could be because of a lack of Christian action and involvement in their homes and community. There is no such thing as passive Christianity where Christians stand by on the sidelines while the Players wear themselves out on the field of life.

If Christians in our communities do not reach the lost with the Good News so they may be saved, then how can we expect them to behave as if they were? If Christians don't cultivate seeds of faith, hope and love within our homes and communities, then a harvest of angst and discord will be heaped upon us.

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Pastors meet for annual pre-convention conference

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Pastors from around the state gathered October 27 at First Church, Jackson, for the 2008 Mississippi Baptist Pastor's Conference, immediately prior to the convening of the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

The conference theme was The Coming Night, based on John 9:4. Buddy Sheriff, pastor of First Church, Florence, served as president. Otho J. Seals Jr., minister of education at First Church, Columbia, served as treasurer. Ross Johnson, minister of music at First Church, Columbia, led praise and worship.

The afternoon session featured preaching by Mississippi Baptist pastors, while the evening session spotlighted pastors from around the Southern Baptist Convention.

Michael Barnett, pastor of First Church, Ocean Springs, led off with a message from Habakkuk, chapter two. He stressed five principles — God answers prayer, God's Word is to be preached, God's people must live by faith, God judges sin, and God is sovereign.

The next message was delivered by Argile Smith, pastor of First Church, Biloxi, based on Matthew 17.

"We must be willing to say, 'You are Christ, Son of the living God, and you can do anything you like to my church or me,' Smith said. 'When was the last time you found yourself face down on the ground because you were in the presence of God almighty? Jesus Himself owns my life.'

Kara Blackard, pastor of Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth, closed out the afternoon session with a message based on Revelation 2:1-5.

"Don't leave your first love," Blackard said. "Your first love should be exciting. There should be excitement in the house of the Lord. It's expressive. It's special because God is love, and it's expensive — you will not come out of the valley unscathed if you follow Jesus."

Gary Ragsdale, pastor of Mt. Zion Church in Alexandria, La., brought the opening message of the evening session from Acts 8:26-40. "There's a call to go into a lost and dying world and tell them Jesus died for their sins," Ragsdale said.

Fred Wolfe, pastor of the Luke 4:18 Fellowship in Mobile, Al., preached next from Romans 13:8-14. "We do not have an economic crisis; we have a moral crisis," Wolfe

said. "Greed and covetousness have brought down the American economic system."

Craig Connor, pastor of First Church in Panama City, Fl., closed out the conference with a message from Acts 4:31. "Church growth is the undeniable will of God," he pointed out.

A number of groups from the First Church, Florence, music ministry performed at the conference, including Ladies of Grace, a women's ensemble; One Purpose, a men's quartet; Surrender, a mixed praise team; and Celebration Singers, the adult choir.

Argile Smith succeeded Sheriff as conference president. Danny Lanier, pastor of Northcrest Church, Meridian, was chosen to serve as president-elect. The 2009 Mississippi Baptist Pastor's Conference will be held on October 26 at First Church, Jackson.

Fireproof still burning hot in theaters

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Bolstered by its opening in more than 100 new theaters, the Christian-themed movie Fireproof finished in the top 10 again on a per-theater average gross over the weekend according to studio estimates — an unusual feat considering it has been in theaters now for six weekends.

The latest release from the makers of Facing the Giants, Fireproof grossed an average of \$1,979 per theater, placing it at No. 9 in that category. It ended up No. 13 in weekend gross with \$1.75 million, helping it pass \$26 million in total gross.

Perhaps most impressive, it lost only 18.5% from the previous weekend — the second smallest drop among all movies in the top 20 that have been out more than one weekend. It

played in 887 theaters over the weekend, and movie officials said it was still playing in 80% of the theaters in which it opened.

Some moviegoers and bloggers have watched with interest how the Christian movie fares against Religulous, an anti-Christian, anti-religion documentary starring comedian Bill Maher. So far, Fireproof has won.

Released one week after Fireproof, Religulous beat Fireproof on a per-theater average its first two weekends, but has dropped significantly since then and has lost to Fireproof on a per-theater average the last three weekends — even though Fireproof has been in theaters one week longer.

Religulous finished No. 21 in weekend gross (\$550,000) and averaged \$1,358 at theaters over the weekend. It has grossed

\$11.4 million in five weekends. Religulous cost \$2.5 million to make; Fireproof cost \$500,000.

Fireproof tells the story of how a firefighting captain played by Kirk Cameron works to save his failing marriage. The Love Dare, a book featured in the movie, was No. 1 for three straight weeks on The New York Times' paperback advice best-seller list before dropping to No. 2 in the Oct. 31 list. It is published by B&H Publishing Group.

Fireproof was made by Sherwood Pictures, which is owned by Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga.

Editor's note: Box office data compiled from BoxOfficeMojo.com. For more information about Fireproof, visit FireproofTheMovie.com. For resources, visit FireproofMyMarriage.com.



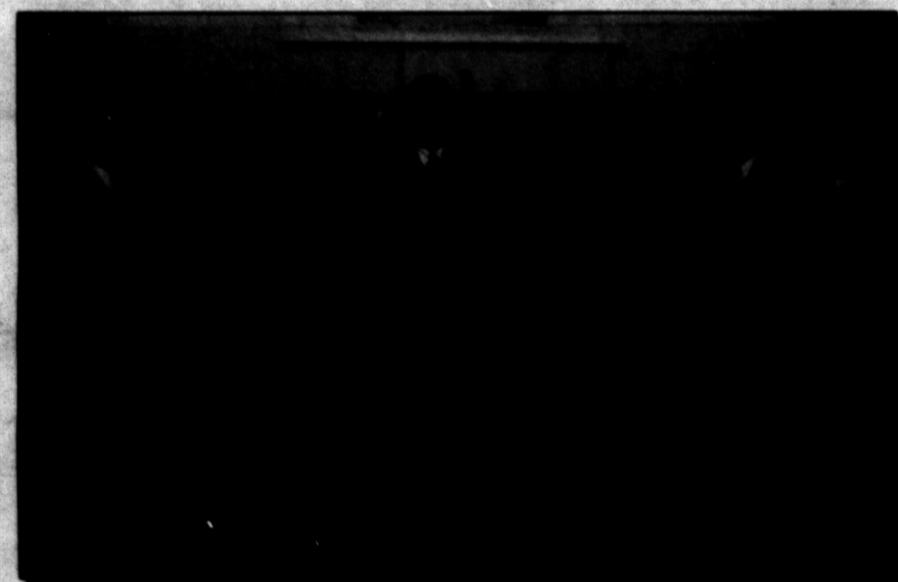
MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS



1. Macedonia Church, Petal



2. Lee ordination



3. Pearlhaven Church deacon ordination



4. Steep Hollow Church anniversary

1. The wMu of Macedonia Church, Petal, honored the church's wives of pastors past and present with a Sweet Tea and Simply Tevine in Hattiesburg Sept. 14. Ashley Gill, guest speaker. Shown are Ruby Garrard, Charlotte Herchanhahn, Linda Sue Doggett, Susie Hartfield, Katherine Pittman, Martha Prestwood, and Jeneanne Miller.

2. Franklin Creek Church, Moss Point, ordained Paul Lee as deacon Oct. 19. Shown are Betsy Lee, Emma Grace Lee, Lee, and pastor John Pemberton.

3. Pearlhaven Church, Brookhaven, ordained Steve Smith, Donnie Nevels, and Jimmy Stephens as deacons Oct. 5. Shown are pastor Anthony Yarborough, Smith, Judith Smith, Nevels, Susan Nevels, Tiny Stephens, Stephens, and Randy Lewman.

4. Roseland Park Church and Steep Hollow Church, Pearl River Association, recently celebrated 75th and 100th anniversaries, respectively. Shown is Steep Hollow Church with pastor Shannon Marshall and AMD Carl Myers.

5. Phalti Church, Prentiss, held a baby dedication Oct. 19. Shown are Beth and Greg Higgins with daughters Bonnie and Elizabeth, pastor Carol Rippy, and Cyndi and Jeff Harper with son Miles.

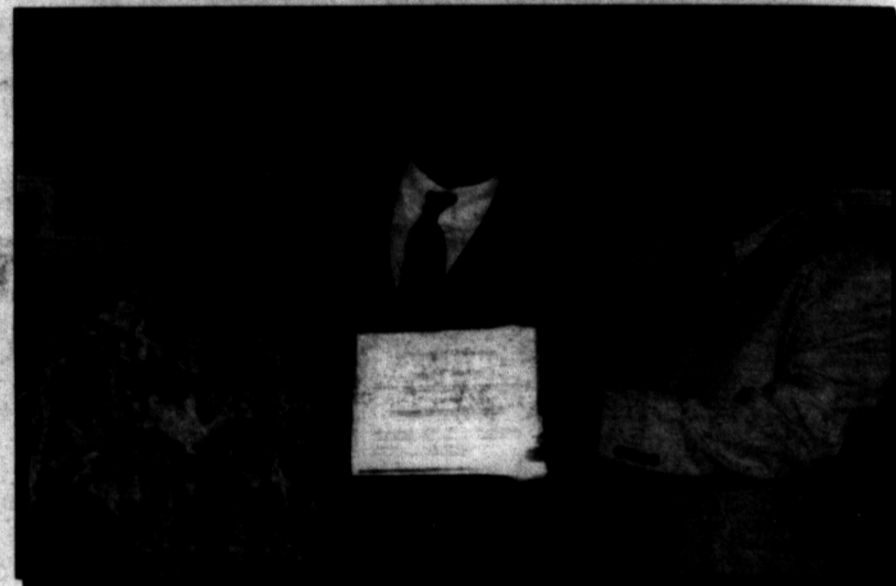
6. Mt. Gilead Church, Meridian, ordained Davey Holloman as deacon Oct. 12. Shown are Debbie Holloman, Holloman, and pastor Gilbert Eaves.

7. Branch Church, Morton, recently honored Ernest Lee Coward for over 70 years of active service by presenting him a plaque containing a picture of him laying bricks on their newly constructed Christian Life Center.

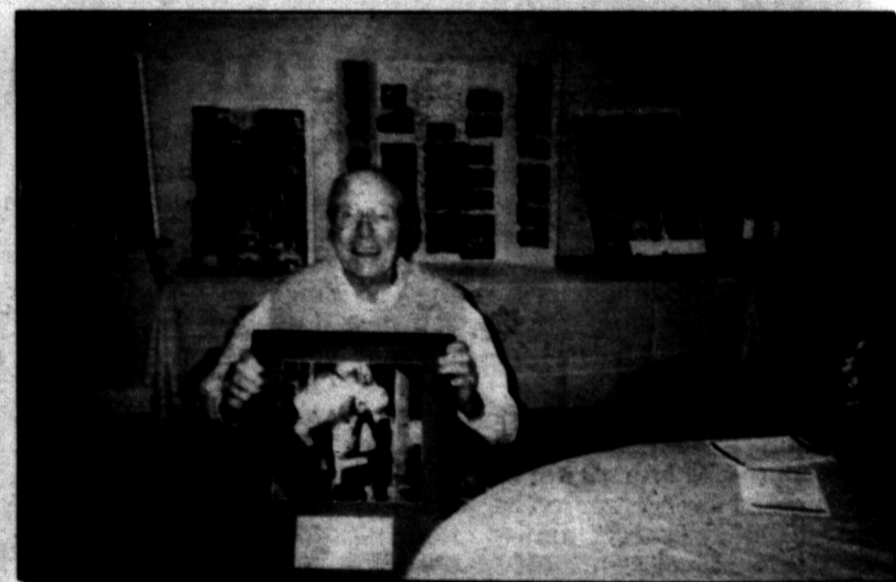
8. First Church, Morton, participated in Scott County GA Day Aug. 2. Shown are Angel Coley, Lilly Herring, and Sydney Phillips.



5. Phalti Church baby dedication



6. Holloman ordination, Mt Gilead



7. Coward, Branch Church



8. Scott County GA Day

JUST FOR THE RECORD



9. Ruffin ordination



10. Henderson and Alexander



11. Baby dedication, Liberty Church



12. First Church, Pearl, deacon ordination

9. Bissell Church, Tupelo, ordained Jerry Ruffin as deacon Oct. 26. Shown are Patsy Ruffin, Ruffin, and pastor Roger Smith.

10. Baxterville Church, Lumberton, received a centennial certificate Oct. 5. Shown, left, is AMD Danny Henderson, and associate pastor Ron Alexander.

11. Liberty Church, Carroll County, held a baby dedication service Oct. 12. Shown are J.D., Rainey, and Dustin Dickerson; Gary Tanner, and Angela, Skylar, Anna Grace, and Donnie Cleveland.

12. First Church, Pearl, recently ordained Bobby Collins, Joe Bradshaw, and Howard Lee as deacons. Shown are interim pastor Kiely Young, Collins, Bradshaw, and Lee.

13. Kilmichael Church, Kilmichael, ordained Robert Magee to the ministry Oct. 26. Shown are pastor Gary Jackson, Magee, and Anita Magee.

14. Union West Church, Oxford, ordained Jeffery Allen Bain as a deacon Oct. 26. Shown are pastor Billy Childs and Bain.

15. Bethel Church, Bogue Chitto, held their senior adult celebration Oct. 26. Shown are the participants.

16. First Church, Eupora, will host the Mike Speck Trio in concert Nov. 15, 6 p.m. A love offering will be received.

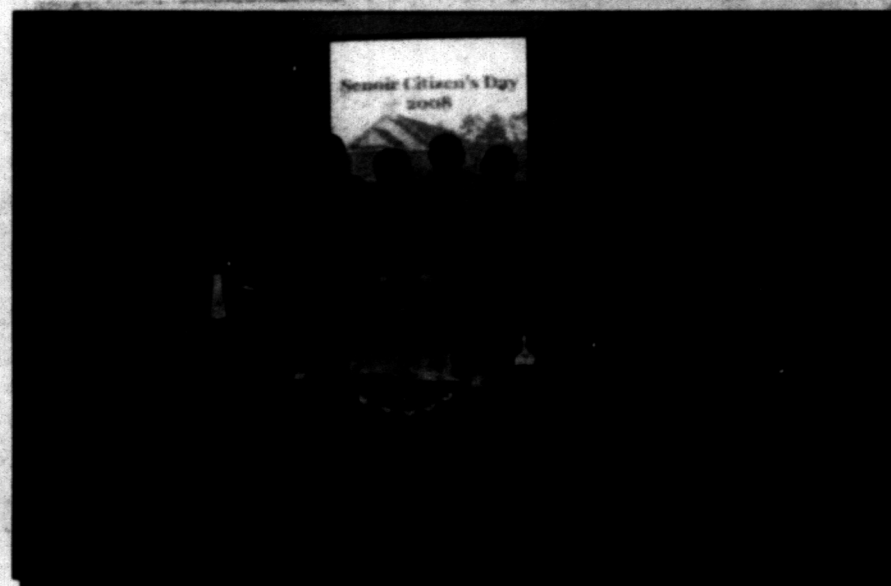
17. Red Creek Union Church, Vestry, ordained Sandy Havens, Jim "Scrap" Havens, John Farris, and Jamie Farris as deacons Oct. 12. Shown are Sandy Havens, Scrap Havens, pastor Jamie Chapman, John Farris, and Jamie Farris.



13. Magee ordination, Kilmichael Church



14. Bain ordination, Union West Church



15. Bethel Church senior adults



17. Red Creek Union Church deacon ordination



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Leadership center to offer courses in Spanish in '09

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Instituto Teológico Bautista de Jackson (ITB Jackson) has been certified as a Contextualized Leadership Development (CLD) by Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, Ca., and will begin offering diploma courses in Spanish in 2009.

Golden Gate Seminary, Southern Baptists' westernmost seminary in the U.S., began Contextualized Leadership Development (CLD) programs more than 28 years ago with a vision to shape effective Christian leaders of every language group in North America.

Dedicated to missions, GGBTS commits itself to the lives of students who serve local churches. In order to achieve its mission, GGBTS operates CLD centers to affordably equip local leaders at a post-high school level.

The ITB Jackson was the first such center in the state when it began in April 2004 as a part of the Acts 1:8 strategy of Iglesia Bautista Vida Abundante in Jackson, a predominantly Hispanic church that meets at Briarwood Drive Church in Jackson and is pastored by Gaston Romero.

The vision, focused in service with a missional perspective, is on reaching Judea by sharpening Hispanic leaders as followers of Christ and with a Southern Baptist identity.

ITB Jackson was certified as a GGBTS CLD center in March 2008. Currently, there are 49 GGBTS CLD centers in United States and 16 teach in Spanish. CLD-trained church planters, pastors and church staff members are serving around the world. North American Mission Board missionaries and Hispanic Strategist Leaders of several Baptist conventions in United States are GGBTS CLD graduates.

Diplomas in Christian Ministry, Theology, and Church Planting are designed to be completed in two years by attending classes once per week. The programs strive to empower Kingdom growth through supervised ministry experiences, leadership practicums, and involvement in church planting.

Upon completion of a Diploma in Theology or Church Planting, graduates can be certified as GGBTS CLD center



LEARNING PROCESS — Students at Instituto Teológico Bautista de Jackson (ITB Jackson) hit the books at the state's first Contextualized Leadership Development (CLD) center, certified by Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, Ca. The center, which meets at Briarwood Drive Church in Jackson, will begin offering diploma courses in Spanish in 2009. (Special photo)

instructors. CLD graduates of both diplomas, (Diploma in Christian Ministry and Diploma in Theology or Church Planting), when admitted to a Master's program of GGBTS, are eligible to transfer work hours from CLD towards a Master's degree.

Starting in January 2009, ITB Jackson will be serving the Mississippi by offering contextualized syllabi for the needs of Hispanic Baptist leaders, pastors, and church planters.

Ministry Foundations, Introduction to Christian Theology, New Testament Survey, Old Testament Survey, and Writing Skills for the Ministry will be taught

during 2009. Student applications for Winter Term 2009 are open and will end on December 19. Classes will be held every Thursday, beginning on January 8, at Briarwood Drive Church at 245 Briarwood Drive in Jackson.

For more information, contact center director Marysol C.

Romero at PO Box 2306, Ridgeland, MS 39158. Telephone: (601) 260-5177. E-Mail: itbjackson@gmail.com. Web site: www.ggbts.edu

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REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

- Horseshoe Church, Tchula:** Homecoming, Nov. 9; worship, 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon singing; Larry Kilgore, speaker; Perry Irvin, pastor.
- Park Haven Church, Laurel:** 45th homecoming, Nov. 9; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 10:35 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon services featuring former pastors and music directors.
- New Prospect Church, Oxford, Nov. 9 - 12:** 7 p.m. nightly; Kara Blackard, speaker; Ken White, pastor.
- Smithville Church, Smithville:** Homecoming, Nov. 9; services, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch.
- Evansville Church, Coldwater:** Homecoming, Nov. 9, 10 a.m., followed by lunch and fellowship; David Worley, speaker.
- Chesterville Calvary Church, Tupelo:** 35th anniversary and sanctuary dedication service, Nov. 9, 10 a.m., followed by meal; Wesley Stephens, pastor.
- Hope Church, Neshoba County:** Revival, Nov. 9 - 12; Rob Followell, speaker; Steve and Becky Carver, music; Dennis Duvall, pastor.
- French Camp Church, French Camp:** Revival, Nov. 9 - 12; 7 p.m. nightly; Doug Warren, speaker; Randy Bridges, pastor.
- First Church, Aberdeen,** recently held a revival with speaker Keith Fordham and music with Ron and Claudia Henderson. Ten were baptized after the revival, with several more making commitments during and after the revival. Roy McKay, pastor.

MS Positions

SMITHVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, Smithville, Miss. is now accepting resumes for a part-time youth minister. Please send resume to Smithville Baptist Church, search committee, P.O. Box 52, Smithville, MS 38870 or email to sbcc@traceroad.net. For more information or questions, call 662-651-4542.

PART-TIME MINISTRY ASSISTANT: 24-30 hours per week. Mail resume to Jamie Holden, Hillcrest Baptist Church, 5950 Terry Road, Byram, MS 39272.

MURPHY CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH, Louisville, Miss., is seeking a part-time youth minister. Please send resume to search committee, 5379 Bond Rd, Louisville, Ms. 39339 or macksimmon@aol.com. For more info call 662-779-3957.

SEEKING PART-TIME MINISTER OF music: Gillburg Baptist Church, Gillsburg, Miss., searching for a minister of music. Mail resumes for this position or the interim position to Chris Teasley at 6126 MS Hwy 568, Osyka, MS, 39657 or call 601 542-1230.

PELAHATCHIE BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking a part-time minister of music for worship services, adult, youth, and children's choirs. Please forward resume to the Pelahatchie Baptist Church, search committee, P.O. Box 876, Pelahatchie, MS 39145, attn: Due McKinion. Email: due@rankin-county.org.

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1. Howard Keever, professor of music at William Carey University, has received the 2008 Humanities Teacher Award presented by the Mississippi Humanities Council during a lecture recently on campus. Keever presented a lecture entitled The Roots of Rock and Roll.
2. The 41 voice Korean Children's Choir performed Oct. 28 during chapel services at Mississippi College, sang at tables at the MC cafeteria, and toured the Clinton campus. Their fall tour in the United States began Oct. 22 and ended Nov. 4.
3. Mississippi College leaders are increasing the goal of the university's Growing the Vision campaign and now plan to raise \$80 million. President Lee Royce discussed the new goal for the campaign — previously \$65 million — during a meeting Oct. 28 with MC alumni attending the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in Jackson.
4. Mississippi College School of Business will dedicate the Ed Trehern Management Education Center Nov. 6. Trehern, a Pascagoula native, is a 1969 MC business graduate who has been an executive with Delta Health Group since 1993.



1. Korean Children's Choir



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FCC decision deals blow to churches

WASHINGTON (BP) — After his church invested \$250,000 in wireless technology, Chris Hinkle of Prestonwood Church in Dallas is concerned by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) vote in August to ban wireless microphones in the 700 megahertz band.

"There are 75 wireless microphones on our church's property," Hinkle, Prestonwood's director of engineering, told Baptist Press. "The Federal Communications Commission's decision to ban [wireless] microphones [from the 700 MHz band] greatly affects our church."

"On an average Sunday, 15,000 people attend services. Any time there are that many microphones in an area, you have to do a lot of frequency coordination."

Wireless technology users and providers told Baptist Press they believe the FCC's decision on wireless microphones, which are low-power auxiliary stations, will impact both large and small churches throughout the country.

The FCC, however, told BP that churches will not be affected by the ban because their wireless microphones will be able to operate within lower frequencies.

Companies such as Verizon

Wireless and AT&T bought available spectrum, or unused bandwidth known as "white space," from the FCC to utilize space in the 700 MHz band. According to a FCC report, wireless microphones and other low-power auxiliary stations that operate in spectrums other than the 700 MHz band will continue to be able to operate in additional spectrum bands in broadcasting TV channels below 700 MHz.

Chris Lyons, manager of technical and educational communications for the audio company Shure, also sees the FCC decision as taking a financial toll on churches, both large and small.

"Even though larger churches have a larger dollar investment at stake, they are better equipped to handle the situation," Lyons said. "Small churches often rely on volunteer staffs, and many do not have the budget to purchase new equipment."

The FCC decision is unreasonable for people who have spent millions of dollars on wireless equipment to operate within the 700 MHz band,

Lyons said, and he is not alone in his opinion.

Bill Thrasher, president and principal consultant for Thrasher Design Group, said the FCC's decision is simply unfair but has warned his clients to replace their wireless microphone systems in order to honor the requirements of the FCC to vacate the 700 MHz band.

Lyons said the FCC regularly requires wireless microphone users to get a license. Since the majority of microphone users do not, Lyons said the FCC's August 21 report on the issue remains inaccurate.

The report said 156 low-power auxiliary station licenses out of 943 are currently authorized to operate in the 700 MHz band.

Of those 156 licenses, only 30 will operate solely in the 614 though 806 MHz band, which is a part of the 700 MHz band.

Lyons said the big question is, "When do people need to stop using their microphones in the 700 MHz range?" The FCC report said the proposed date is after the transition from analog to digital television on February 17.

Lyons encouraged those affected by the ban to take inventory of all equipment, noting the three M's of microphones: manufacturer, model number and MHz number.

Lyons said the bandwidth number, labeled on either the back of the receiver or inside the transmitter, will determine within what MHz a microphone is located. If it lies within the 700 MHz range, he said it's not possible to retune or remake the microphone.

"It's cheaper to replace a microphone with a new unit, so you don't have to exchange all the old parts with new ones," Lyons said.

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STATE CHANGES

1. Andrew Chapel Church, Brandon, has called Keith McGee as pastor. He is a graduate of Bellhaven College and is pursuing a masters degree in pastoral ministries from Anderson Baptist Theological Seminary. He lives in Brandon with his wife Heather and two sons, Tyler and Joshua.

2. Beulah Church, Magee, recently called Maxwell Price as pastor. A reception was held in honor of Price and his wife Joanna Oct. 26.



2. The Prices

Southwestern officials meet with homosexual group

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP and local reports) — A private one-hour dialogue October 27 between members of Soulforce, a homosexual activist group, and representatives of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, was described as "cordial and kind spirited."

The two parties discussed their opposing viewpoints about faith and sexuality at the seminary's Riley Center, according to a statement released by the seminary.

"At Southwestern we teach the responsibility of sharing the love of Jesus Christ with everyone," said a statement released by Thomas White, Southwestern's vice president for student services and communications. "In holding this dialogue, we acted out our beliefs by considerably sharing the Gospel."

Students, faculty, staff, and administration participated in the dialogue with members of the 2008 Soulforce Equality Ride, an annual tour of schools Soulforce uses to get publicity for homosexual issues. Each side gave a 25-minute presentation of its beliefs and the remaining time was spent in dialogue about disagreements, the statement said.

The Southwestern community was able to clearly express its perspective that God loves people caught in sexual sin and offers healing and forgiveness to those who repent, White added.

"After meeting with them, our position remains unchanged," White said. "The Bible condemns all forms of sexual immorality including pornography, adultery, lust, and homosexuality, but the

Bible also offers hope that while all people have sinned, those willing to repent, turn from their sin, and call upon the name of Jesus Christ may be forgiven."

As a confessional institution of the Southern Baptist Convention, Southwestern Seminary holds the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as its statement of faith, White noted.

Article XV of the Baptist Faith and Message states: "In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose... all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality and pornography," and that Christians should "act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth."

In Mississippi, two members of the Soulforce entourage were arrested for trespassing October 20 when they entered the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton after being warned to stay off the property, according to news reports. It was the second time in a year that Soulforce targeted Mississippi College for protests.

Mississippi College is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The university's Student Handbook prohibits sexual impropriety and further states, "Sexual impropriety includes but is not limited to participation in or appearance of engaging in premarital sex, extramarital sex or homosexual activities."

Eric Pratt, MC vice-president of Christian development, said the school would not allow outside pressure groups to influence the university's mission.

"Soulforce continues to



MC TARGETED — Protesters allied with Soulforce Q, an organization promoting homosexual rights, line up October 20 on the College Street sidewalk just off the campus of Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton to protest what they allege is discrimination against "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender" students in the Baptist-affiliated university's Student Handbook. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

undermine traditional, biblical positions. It is clear that Soulforce is not tolerant of individuals or institutions that hold a conservative, evangelical position.

"We will not allow any group to force their agenda upon us. As a Christian university we will protect and teach the biblical truths held by Mississippi College, the Mississippi Baptist

Convention, and our constituents," he said.

Twelve Soulforce members were arrested in March 2007 during a sit-in at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and 24 were arrested in March 2006 for trespassing on the campus of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

In addition to Mississippi College and Southwestern Seminary, this year's Equality Ride publicity tour also includes

stops at Liberty University; Columbia International University in Columbia, S.C.; Morehouse College and Spelman College in Atlanta; Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Fla.; Louisiana College in Pineville; Dallas Baptist University; Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ar.; Central Baptist College in Conway, Ar.; and Union University in Jackson, Tn.

Ca. pastor free after ten-day kidnapping, torture in Mexico

SAN DIEGO (BP) — Southern Baptist pastor Manuel Jesus Tec is free after 11 days of torture at the hands of unknown kidnappers who abducted him in Tijuana, Mexico, on October 21.

Tec currently is recuperating at an undisclosed San Diego hospital and is expected to make a full recovery.

Tec, age 59, was released around 6 a.m. on October 31, following extensive negotiations, according to Johnny Tec, the pastor's 30-year-old son.

"Dad was hurt," Johnny Tec said, adding that his father endured significant physical and psychological trauma during the ordeal.

Tec was whipped with barbed wire whenever he started praying or talking to his captors about God, Johnny Tec said.

"They became angry whenever he tried to pray," Tec said. "He was kept in a cage on what he thinks was a ranch someplace. He had no food or water. His whole head was

covered in duct tape the whole time except for his nose and mouth. Most of the time, his eyes were also covered with duct tape and on one occasion, they threw acid in his eyes."

Tec said the family was instructed to meet one of the kidnappers under a Tijuana bridge around 3:30 a.m. last Friday morning.

Complying with the instructions, one of the pastor's sons arrived at the bridge and was told his father would be delivered in five minutes.

After two hours passed and the kidnappers had not produced his father, the son



Tec

returned home alone.

Johnny Tec said the kidnappers had loosely buried his father under gravel and sand and shot at him with "some kind of machine gun," according to what the pastor later recounted to his family.

Fortunately, none of the bullets pierced the half-buried pastor and the kidnappers departed.

Tijuana policemen — possibly hearing the gunshots — found Tec, pulled him from the sand and gravel, and carried him to a local community hospital in Tijuana.

Around 8 a.m. on October 31, the Tijuana hospital

called the family and told them Tec had been admitted. The family arranged for Manuel to be transferred by ambulance to an undisclosed hospital across the U.S. border in San Diego.

"It was heartbreaking when we finally first saw him in the hospital," Johnny Tec recounted, "because he was afraid of us. The kidnappers took advantage of the fact that he had not eaten and was hallucinating. They would tell him that my brother and I were going to continue beating him. We had to gain his trust back because he was afraid of us."

Also at one time during his capture, Tec had been told that his entire family — his wife Maria and all five children — had been killed by the kidnappers, Johnny Tec said.

"He thought we were all dead. One by one, we had to reintroduce the family to him so he would realize that we're all OK. Dad's making fast progress.

As he gets better, he's remembering more about what they did to him. He's been through a lot of bad stuff," Johnny Tec said. "He's really excited to be back and thanks all the Southern Baptists for their prayers."

The strange 11-day ordeal began around 5 a.m. on Oct. 21, when armed kidnappers abducted Tec as he was crossing over the border from San Diego to Tijuana. His wife and son Giovanni were with him but not taken or hurt.

Tec is pastor of a new Hispanic church plant in San Diego, Iglesia Familiar y Vida.

Johnny Tec said the family still has no idea why his father was kidnapped. Tijuana is known as a dangerous border town, where the kidnapping and murder of white-collar professionals by gangs is almost a daily occurrence.

"I don't think we'll ever know why he was targeted," Johnny Tec said. "My dad just thinks God wanted us to become closer as a family."

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Not Conformed But Transformed

Romans 12:1-8, 14-21

By Bobby McKay

As a football fan, I was amazed recently at the unfolding drama regarding Brett Favre's retirement, as well as the commotion about his eventual return. One of the strangest occurrences I witnessed was the emergence of New York Jets jerseys with the #4 along with the name "Favre" on the back. It was not only odd to see the future Hall of Fame quarterback in a different shade of green; it was even more out of the ordinary to observe scores of Mississippians with a New York jersey on. Despite all the folks proudly displaying their new game apparel, I did not mistake any of them with being Brett Favre. Some were women, some were children, and some had probably not

picked up a football in 20 years. The jersey failed to transform them into Brett Favre.

All of these men and women share two things in common: they will probably never become a professional quarterback and secondly, they share an allegiance to the same player.

If you are a Christian, do you realize that you wear a jersey each day? Your wardrobe may not represent a sports organization or athlete, but we display the name of Jesus everywhere we go. The knowledge of this fact should stir within our hearts and minds a couple of realizations. First, we must realize that Jesus is not a piece of laundry that we can take off and put on when it appears to be the most advantageous for us. By this I mean



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we must constantly be on guard to resist the devil and his plea to conform us to this sinful world. The second realization of our "Jesus jerseys" is that when we became believers and followers in Christ, we are a new creation. As bearers of the name of

Jesus, we have the awesome privilege of being transformed from the inside out. This is a process that should be evident by the life we live, a longing to worship God, and a burden for those we come in contact with.

I. Paul's Pattern (Romans 12:1-2)

No one can deny that the Apostle Paul was a changed man. Because of that change, Paul was a passionate man. One reason I enjoy reading the writings of Paul so much is his amazing ability to balance both boldness and sincerity. This pattern is an important one to note. When he tells us of the transforming power of Christ, he is not speaking from a standpoint of theory; rather he is sharing from a changed heart.

He shares from experiences and encounters he has had with the Father. Paul desired that no one settle for anything but the best that Christ can give. The "best" is a transformed and revolutionary new life found only in Jesus. God forgave us when we choose the world's cheap imitations over the authentic love and peace that the Master provides!

II. Paul's Progression (Romans 12:3-8)

Paul then progresses through the next section of this chapter with thoughts and teachings on humility and the body of Christ. His progression here is a logical one. Obviously, it is impossible to truly model Christ in humility and service if we are not saved. Paul desired those reading these words would see the necessity of the local church. He wrote in verse 5 that we are "individually members one of another" (NASB). We seem to forget many times that each member of a church brings with him or her at least one gift from God. The local church will be effective in the community only after the body is in symphony

with the utilization and progression of our talents and gifts.

III. Paul's Perseverance (Romans 12:14-21)

Have you noticed at the end of a football game that some of the player's jerseys are dirtier than others? What's the difference? The dirt and blood-stained jerseys represent time on the playing field. Paul was not satisfied with sitting on the bench. He wanted in on the action. His perseverance is a testimony to all of us today. He reminds us to keep moving forward. He knew all too well that persecution and naysayers would try to bring all of us down. He pressed on. His mission was not revenge, rather leaving vengeance of our enemies up to God. With each passing day, he was being transformed into the image of Christ. His jersey was tattered and torn. Do our jerseys reveal that we are bench warmers or do they show the wear and tear of being active participants in service to Christ?

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EXPLORE THE BIBLE

When Assessing One's Lifework

2 Samuel 5:1-8:18

By Ginger M. Caughman

After riding through a road repair zone, you've seen the familiar sign posted: "End of Construction. Thank you for your patience." Ruth Graham once smiled upon seeing such a sign, and quipped, "I want those words on my gravestone." Ruth Bell Graham (1920-2007)

After Ruth's death in June 2007, her family honored her request. Born in China of missionary parents, the grave marker for Ruth Bell Graham has the Chinese character for "righteousness" and the words she asked for, indicating the end of her physical journey.

How do you measure success? Today the word assessment is big in education.

Teachers assess where students begin, the learning goals, then evaluate accomplishments.

What is your lifework? Has your life had meaning so far?

What is your assessment of your Christian life? What are God's purposes for you? No one accomplishes anything worthwhile alone. How did David cope with life?

1. New Leader Established

David was anointed king over all of Israel and needed a new capital city. David's military and political success was due to the sovereignty of "the Lord God of Hosts" (5:10). David captured the fortress of Zion and called it the City of David (5:1-10). After three months, the ark of the Lord was brought to a tent David had pitched and devotion to God was shown (6:11-15, 17-19).

Later Zion was named Jerusalem, the capital of the nation. "From now on this lovely city was destined to play a prominent part in the life of the Hebrew nation and many other



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peoples, even to the present. To multitudes Jerusalem is the 'Holy City' of history" (H. I. Hester).

2. But What Does God Say?

Sometimes we want to do one thing but God's plan for us is another based on His

Kingdom purposes and His timing. David earnestly wanted to build a temple for the worship of Jehovah and to house the Ark of the Lord. At first Nathan the Prophet told him to do it. But after Nathan consulted the Lord in prayer, he had to come back to David with God's message (7:1-5).

3. Have You Completed Your Assignment?

Through His prophet Nathan, God told David: "I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel" (2 Sam. 7:8). You were a shepherd and now you're a king! Later David would write, The Lord is my Shepherd..."

God would not let David build the temple but promised, his son and successor would

build the temple and he could make plans and assemble the materials. (7:8-17). God wanted David to lead the people to a time of peace and prosperity (Read also 1 Chronicles 22). God graciously bestows talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts on all believers and wants us to trust Him and diligently do the work He gives us.

I like those grocery store booklets citing "God's Promises." A long list begins in Second Samuel as God promises David an eternal throne (2 Sam. 7:16). The list of God's divine promises to David continues throughout the Old and into the New Testaments. "David's family will reign forever over God's people and there would come from David (Isaiah 9:6-7), an eternal family line of kings, culminating in one eternal King" ("Halley's Bible Handbook," p. 184). We are part of that spiritual line. Hallelujah!

4. God's Best Is Yet to Come: Praise God

After Nathan told David everything the Lord had said, David humbly comes before God and pours out his heart. Be sure and read his long

humble prayer (7:18-29). "After hearing the Lord's promises concerning his family's future, David praised God for giving him a glimpse of great things for his family and all future humanity!"

David enjoyed a successful reign (8:1-18). "The Lord gave David victory wherever he went" (8:6b, 14b, 15 NIV).

The Apostle Paul made a great assessment of his lifework as he wrote his last will and testament to Timothy. Paul also wrote for each believer today when he penned the beautiful words about the good fight of faith in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:7-8 KJV). Meanwhile let us continue the work God has given each of us.

David Elton Trueblood (1900-1994), beloved Quaker philosopher, teacher, theologian and outstanding Christian, titled his autobiography, "While It Is Day!" "I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day..." (John 9:4 KJV). Let us go and do likewise!

Caughman teaches a senior ladies Sunday School class at First Church Magee.

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

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